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Humanitarian corridors into Ethiopia's Tigray region may now be the country's hope for lasting peace, after efforts for an immediate diplomatic solution hit a wall.

This week, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the rebel group that has been fighting the government since November 2020, said they could leave occupied territories in neighbouring regions if humanitarian corridors were provided and the blockade by the government lifted.

These TPLF conditions came three weeks after a mediated truce was announced to allow humanitarian aid to reach Tigray, but which TPLF and aid agencies said have only been a trickle.

Efforts to have lasting peace depends on consistent aid delivery, for now. And even the West, which initially pushed for dialogue, has been keen on cessation of violence and access to humanitarian aid.

"Last week's delivery of humanitarian assistance in Tigray is welcome news. But make no mistake: More help is needed," said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the UN in a statement, which adds that "Humanitarian access to Tigray, and the resumption of basic services, including electricity, telecommunications, and banking, is vital."

This week, the TPLF wrote an open letter to the UN, suggesting the region's continued blockade will not help peace.

"There has been a regrettably mistaken assumption on the part of the international community that the decision by Tigray forces to withdraw from neighbouring regions in December was enough to ensure Ethiopia's peace and security," it said, arguing it deployed troops into Afar and Amhara as a response to the crisis, not to cause it.

"In reality, the deployment of our forces outside Tigray was the result, not the driver, of the crisis that have been convulsing the country."

"There is no doubt that the current status quo is unsustainable, replete as it is with a number of interlocking socioeconomic, political and security elements that, if not attended to urgently, will lead to the collapse of the state, and the disintegration of the country's social fabric, which is already hanging by a thread."

Conditions

On Thursday, the rebels issued four preconditions to fully withdraw from neighbouring Afar region.

First, that there should be safe corridors for the delivery of vital humanitarian aid; second, a system be put in place to facilitate the provision of adequate humanitarian assistance; third, the lifting of the long imposed “abhorrent blockade” on Tigray and fourth, the restoration of essential socioeconomic services. These conditions, the group said, should be verified by an independent, impartial entity such as the UN.

It is unknown whether the government will agree to the conditions. Meanwhile, the World Food programme said on Thursday that more food trucks could be dispatched to Tigray to deliver food.

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